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SUBJECT: USINT HAVANA ANNUAL CRIME EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE
- SPRING 2009

REF: STATE 013020

Post's response is slugged to the questions enumerated in Reftel.

15. Crime Mobility (into Emboff neighborhoods): (B)
Criminal elements generally concentrate their activities in high crime areas, but sometimes enter nearby neighborhoods to burglarize residences. NOTE: The Government of Cuba (GOC) does not release crime statistics nor provide criminal intelligence to the United States Interests Section (USINT) regarding the safety of our residential neighborhoods. Information obtained by the Regional Security Office is completely dependent on employee (Amcit and LCN), family member, media and anecdotal reports. Based on a comparison with previous years' reporting, there does not appear to be an increase in the amount or severity of crimes affecting USINT employees.

16. Crime ambiance (around Emboff neighborhoods): (B)
Surrounded by low crime buffer zones, which are perceived as safe during the day, but are unsafe at night because of street crime. NOTE: Response categories do not provide an appropriate choice for Havana as Interests Section residences are located in neighborhoods ranging from affluent to working class. In addition, USINT is assigned housing by the GOC with little-to-no choice regarding security. Generally, USINT houses are bordered by a mix of well-kept properties but some are located near dilapidated / vacant homes and lots.

17. Aggressiveness of criminals. Perpetrators usually: (B)
Commit street crimes and burglaries, but rely on stealth during burglaries. NOTE: USINT FTE employees reported a total of 16 crime incidents during the January 2008-2009 period. The most serious included four instances of theft of satellite dishes from rooftops, and four reports of property theft. There was only one instance where an Amcit employee was confronted by criminals and that occurred while the employee was walking in a park at night near his residence. The thieves stole the employee's backpack and a cellular telephone but no one was injured. Local Contract National employees at USINT reported two assaults and one theft during the reporting period, yet we suspect that the numbers were actually higher based on historic records. Crime victim reports from U.S. citizen tourists and diplomatic contacts indicate that most involve theft of wallets/passports and other personal belongings in non-confrontational situations. It is also worth noting that the local police authorities and media do not publish reports of violent crime in Cuba yet Post is aware that assaults, rapes and murder occur.

18. Arming of criminals. Perpetrators usually are: (B)
Armed with knives or lethal cutting weapons. NOTE: Although the number of incidents involving armed attackers is small, Post notes that the theft of satellite dishes and other property requires tools and/or knives to defeat security hardware and countermeasures. LCN and anecdotal reporting indicates that the use of knives and other lethal weapons is common in other neighborhoods. Post also notes that the importation of guns and other weapons is tightly controlled by the GOC.

¶9. Aggregation of criminals. Perpetrators usually: (B) Operate in groups of two to four individual; are prepared to be confrontational, but generally avoid gratuitous violence. NOTE: Most crimes against USINT Amcit employees involve theft of items in a non-confrontational setting. We presume from the nature of the crimes that small groups are involved to help with logistics (i.e., disassembly and lowering the satellite dish) and security lookouts needed to avoid being caught. Post does not have credible or corroborated information that indicates armed gangs operate with impunity in Havana.

¶10. Deterrence/response of police: (C) Local police or neighborhood associations are generally ineffective at deterring crime, and response to alarms or emergency calls are often too slow (15 minutes or longer) to disrupt burglaries or invasive crimes in progress in Emboff neighborhoods. Police have a mediocre record in apprehending criminals after the fact. NOTE: USINT employs two 24-hour LGF mobile patrol units to conduct residential security checks and respond to panic alarms and requests for assistance. Inasmuch as Cuba is a police state with law enforcement and security forces highly visible in tourist areas and certain neighborhoods, USINT's experience is generally negative in that police response is slow and ineffective. Pursuant to various thefts outside USINT residences this year, GOC Diplomatic Police elements responded and conducted fairly basic crime scene investigations (photographs, fingerprints). RSO Havana did not receive any follow-up from GOC police and, on two occasions, developed lead information from neighbors and other witnesses that were never interviewed.

¶11. Training/professionalism of police: (B) Police are generally professional, reasonably well-trained, but may have resource/manpower limitations that inhibit their deterrence or response effectiveness. NOTE: Due to the strained relations between the USG and GOC, RSO USINT has been unable to develop quantifiable information related to local police training, mission, equipment, readiness or capabilities.

COMMENT: The lack of free media and government transparency in Cuba, travel restrictions on USINT employees, and limited law enforcement/security liaison due to the strained bilateral relationship makes it difficult to provide an in-depth evaluation of the crime situation and police capabilities in Cuba.

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